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QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD

Written statement*/ submitted by the International Federation of Social Workers, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[31 March 2000]

*/ This written statement is issued, unedited, as received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

The International Federation of Social Workers views with alarm the long-standing and apparently systematic abuse of human rights in East Timor, as outlined in the Note by the Secretary-General, *Situation of Human Rights in East Timor* (A/54/660). Observers from the International Federation of Social Workers visited East Timor at the time of the Popular Consultation in August 1999, and again in November 1999. Their observations, and the statements they received from many people in East Timor, are consistent with the reports by the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial or arbitrary executions, the Special Rapporteur on torture, and the Special Rapporteur on violence against women. Indeed, the view of IFSW observers is that there was probably more extensive human rights abuse in East Timor than has been documented to date. The IFSW observers were led to the inevitable conclusion that the responsible authorities at the time had at the very least allowed such human rights violations to occur, by taking minimal action to prevent them, and indeed there is evidence to suggest a more active role taken by military and police forces in the organisation, promotion and commission of human rights abuses in East Timor.

The IFSW observers were struck by the scale of the destruction which took place in September 1999, but were equally struck by the courage, determination and hope of the East Timorese people. They also expressed concern at the way in which many international aid and development agencies, including UN agencies, did not always seem to listen to the voices of East Timorese people in determining programs and priorities for aid and development. The same principle should be applied to human rights matters, including the ways in which human rights abuses should be investigated, the ways in which demonstrated abuses should be addressed, and the way in which human rights safeguards should be established in the new East Timor. East Timorese society has shown that it is strong, resourceful and community-based, and this needs to be taken into account in addressing human rights issues, for example in determining the extent to which a justice model, as opposed to a truth and reconciliation model, should be pursued.

The IFSW is concerned for the promotion of human rights, and the prevention of human rights abuses, as human rights is at the core of the social work profession. It is also concerned that in East Timor the views of the East Timorese people themselves should have priority. Accordingly the IFSW urges the United Nations:

- to engage in meaningful dialogue with East Timorese leaders, with community and Church representatives, and with existing East Timorese Human Rights Organisations, about the way in which alleged human rights abuses should be investigated and dealt with.
- to devote adequate resources and expertise to the continued investigation of alleged human rights abuses, in cooperation with East Timorese community representatives.
- to support East Timorese human rights organisations in the establishment of human rights monitoring mechanisms, and in pursuing human rights objectives.
- to work for the immediate return of the East Timorese refugees still in West Timor.
- to work with the Government of Indonesia to ensure that further encroachments across the border by former militia members are stopped.

The IFSW is willing and eager to offer the United Nations its skills and expertise in the pursuance of these objectives.